

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 IO-11 AID-05 PC-01 OMB-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 FBO-02

SCCT-01 DHA-02 CCO-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05

SP-02 OC-05 OPR-02 PA-01 USSS-00 PRS-01 SCA-01 A-01

SS-15 SY-05 /099 W

----- 085260

O P 020820Z MAR 76

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3856

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO PRIORITY

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON PRIORITY

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC PRIORITY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN PRIORITY

COMIDEASTFOR PRIORITY

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA PRIORITY

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI PRIORITY

CNO WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0197

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJECT: FIREFIGHT IN VICINITY CONGEN COMPOUND

PAGE 2 RUFTEFA5197 C O N F I D E N T I A L

REF: ASMARA 0196 (DTG 011345Z MAR 76)

1. FOR THIRD STRAIGHT NIGHT IN ASMARA, NOISY INSURGENT ACTIVITY
OCCURRED. THIS TIME (NIGHT MARCH 1-2) IT TOOK THE FORM OF AN
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HOURLONG FIREFIGHT BEGINNING AT 0230 LOCAL TIME IN VICINITY

CONGEN COMPOUND. SPORADIC AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE, INCLUDING HEAVY MACHINEGUNS, PUNCTUATED BY SINGLE-SHOT RIFLE FIRE, OCCURRED IN AREA NORTH AND EAST OF CONSULATE. THERE IS NO WAY OF TELLING WHETHER ATTACK ACTUALLY DIRECTED AGAINST CONGEN OR OTHER TARGETS IN GENERAL AREA, BUT FIRE WAS EXTREMELY CLOSE AND FROM TIME TO TIME RUNNING FIGURES WERE SEEN IN STREETS ADJACENT TO CONGEN COMPOUND BY ROVING MARINE GUARD AND LOCAL GUARDS. FIRING ENDED AT 0330 LOCAL TIME WITH RESOUNDING DETONATION OF ROCKET IN IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF CONGEN COMPOUND. MARINE GUARD SAW FLASH NEAR SCHOOL JUST OUTSIDE COMPOUND.

2. AS FAR AS WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DETERMINE, THERE WAS NO ACTION ANYWHERE ELSE IN ASMARA LAST NIGHT.

3. SUBSEQUENT INQUIRIES MORNING OF MARCH 2 AND TOUR OF CITY

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BY CONGENOFF INDICATE THAT FOCUS OF ATTACK APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN POLICE SUBSTATION LOCATED WITHIN TWO BLOCKS OF CONGEN COMPOUND. SWEEP OF RESIDENTIAL AREA EAST OF CONSULATE WAS REPORTEDLY SPARKED BY TRACE OF BLOOD FOUND HALF BLOCK BELOW POLICE STATION. TRAIL LED TO EASTERN OUTSKIRTS. OTHERWISE ASMARA IS QUIETLY OBSERVING HOLIDAY, THOUGH SEVERAL KEY ROUTES IN TOWN ARE UNDER EXCEPTIONALLY HEAVY GUARD.

4. WE CAN ONLY SPECULATE REASONS FOR THE ATTACK. INSURGENTS MAY HAVE WISHED TO ANNOUNCE THEIR PRESENCE AND CAPABILITY ON THE EVE OF MARCH 2 HOLIDAY WHICH COMMEMORATES THE ETHIOPIAN VICTORY OVER THE ITALIANS AT ADWA. WHETHER OBJECTIVE OF ATTACK WAS CONGEN OR OTHER TARGET IN VICINITY, THE EFFECT IS THE SAME. BULLETS DID WHISTLE OVERHEAD AND FOLIAGE OF TREES IN CONGEN COMPOUND SUFFERED. NO ONE WAS INJURED.

5. IN VIEW INCREASED LEVEL INSURGENT ACTIVITY AND INHERENT DANGERS IN SUCH AN ATTACK AS LAST NIGHT'S I FEEL OBLIGED AGAIN TO SUGGEST TPRRWJN LRHADOR HUMMEL RECONSIDER HIS INTENTION TO VISIT ASMARA MARCH 3. SHERRY

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